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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 005431

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TAGS: [PREL](#), [IZ](#), [JO](#)

SUBJECT: KING ABDULLAH WELCOMES IIG; PRIVATE JORDAN  
REACTION SKEPTICAL

REF: A. AMMAN 5353

[B](#). AMMAN 5385

[C](#). AMMAN 5415

Classified By: DCM David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The official GOJ reaction to the surprise early transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) was strongly positive. King Abdullah sent separate congratulatory messages to President al-Yawar and Prime Minister Allawi pledging Jordan's full support to ensure Iraqi security and stability. Press commentary proved to be mixed, however. Privately, our contacts see the transfer of sovereignty as a step in the right direction, but expect the violence in Iraq to continue. Along with much of the Jordanian street, they are also skeptical that the U.S. will allow the IIG to exercise full sovereignty, especially concerning military operations and actions of the multi-national forces (MNF). End Summary.

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OFFICIAL AND PRESS REACTION TO TRANSFER OF SOVEREIGNTY  
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[1](#)2. (U) Public GOJ reaction to the surprise June 28 transfer of sovereignty to the IIG was resoundingly positive. King Abdullah sent separate messages to President al-Yawar and Prime Minister Allawi expressing Jordan's full support for Iraq and backing "for all the measures that the Iraqi government will take to guarantee its security and the stability of Iraq." The King told Allawi in his public letter that "the unification of the people of Iraq is the guarantee that will foil attempts by those who want to undermine Iraq's stability and its process for democratization."

[1](#)3. (U) Press commentary before the handover predicted a near doomsday scenario, claiming that average Iraqis expected a spike in violence and were hoarding food and water. The immediate reaction after the handover remained skeptical, with some commentary describing the transfer as "another act in a play" and the new IIG as "nothing but the tails of the crusaders." One op-ed characterized the transfer of sovereignty as nothing more than a "protocol exchange of papers between Bremer and Allawi." Negative media reactions were tempered by positive remarks calling upon multi-national forces to remain until the security situation improved, reflecting the views of many educated, elite Jordanians. Much of the Jordanian "street," on the other hand, views actions against the multi-national forces as part of the "noble resistance," and contends that the presence and behavior of MNF troops provokes violence in Iraq.

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PRIVATE REACTION  
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[1](#)4. (C) In private, our contacts responded positively to the transfer, but questioned the extent of Iraq's sovereignty. University of Jordan professor Dr. Bashir al Khadra, for example, said there would not be true sovereignty until there are free elections, and the continued presence of MNF, though necessary, is a constant reminder of occupation. Human rights activist Dr. Fawzzi Samhouri saw the transfer of authority as cosmetic because it was not clear, in his view, that the Iraqis were truly calling the shots. He criticized the appointment of Iyad Allawi as PM believing that Iraqi Sunnis would not support a Shi'a PM. Further, many Jordanians are dubious about Allawi's previous purported association with the CIA. Former MP and businessman Muhammad al-Kouz said he expected the IIG to fail because it did not, he claimed, have the means to achieve stability. In a June 28 embassy tea with twelve MPs selected for an International Visitor program, PolOff observed the MPs were more interested in the security situation in Iraq than the handover.

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COMMENT  
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[1](#)5. (C) The King and his foreign policy and security advisors see in the emergence of known, credible leaders in the IIG,

and the smooth transition of authority, a hopeful sign. However, average Jordanians tend to view the handover as a positive but insufficient step in restoring Iraq's independence. Many will remain skeptical of the extent of the IIG's sovereignty as long as large numbers of U.S. troops are present.

16. (U) AMEMBASSY Baghdad minimize considered.

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